INSPIRED PARTNERSHIPS AWARDS LUNCHEON

March 7, 2001

JOHN M. BUCHANAN, PASTOR

FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

--Honored by the award.

--Grateful to Inspired Partnership

--I love this city—always have—and the more I live in it, the more I love it.

--I recall the first time I saw it, driving from Pennsylvania to attend the University of Chicago Divinity School.

--Down Lake Shore Drive with all our possessions in a 1957 Ford.

--Rush hour, headed for Evanston

--The night in September 1959 that the White Sox won the pennant and some enthusiastic soul set off the Civil Defense alarm system.

--Sirens—end of the world.

I love the city—it is the honor of my life to be the pastor of an urban church, located on one of Chicago's busiest corners.

--to work and live in the city

and so, a very special gift to receive a Community Catalyst Award.

Fourth Presbyterian Church uses as the symbol of its mission, "A Light in the City."

We know there are much brighter lights—nevertheless, we see our presence as a reminder of some ideas that sometimes get lost in a busy modern metropolitan environment.

That we live in the presence of the Holy—that there is no urban environment—Michigan and Delaware, City Hall, Cabrini Green, Cook County Hospital, University of Chicago, Wrigley Field—that is not in some way the theater of divine presence and activity.

There are occasions when I pray for a little more divine activity up at Clark and Addison where some of us will gather in 3 ½ weeks. Did any one else notice that the Cubs' opening day is just 24 hours after April Fools Day?

We, Fourth Presbyterian Church, all of us, all faith communities, are reminders of the Holy.
And as a Light in the City, Fourth Presbyterian Church—all of us are reminders that each individual human life is important.

And we are reminders in this busy environment of the critical importance of community.

People belong to churches and synagogues and mosques and all sorts of faith communities.

People are known and paid attention to and cared for and grieved and rejoiced with and celebrated in our

institutions, perhaps more than anywhere else in our society.

A new research study by the Hartford Institute for Religious Research, *Doing Good in Chicago,* begins:

> “The wellbeing of every community depends on harnessing the contributions of its citizens. Sustaining viable communities requires places where people can gather, work together, and learn to trust one another—where we generate what Robert Putnam has called “social capital.” We depend on the neighborhood associations and political action groups, parent associations and leagues of civil rights activists, as well as the

churches, synagogues and mosques that provide places of concern, belonging and action.”

The study, which measures the impact of FBO’s (our new name) and finds it overwhelmingly positive, concludes:

“There is a dense and complex web of connection in every community—a web that binds together the agencies that serve the community with the congregations in which people of faith gather. Those communities of faith are first and foremost places where people gather for spiritual strength and moral guidance, where they find a caring

community in which to express themselves and find a home.

> Even when congregations have no overt ministries or other connections in the community, they serve us well by doing these basic religious tasks."

And so, we are making a difference—all of us—in different ways: some visible and dramatic, some not so visible and not very dramatic. Some as un-dramatic as standing close to one of our number who is afraid, or devastated by grief, or opening our hearts to someone who doesn't "belong" anywhere, or letting a child know that someone cares, someone knows her name, someone thinks he matters.

I’m grateful to Inspired Partnerships. I’m deeply proud to be named a Community Catalyst. And I’m honored to be associated with people who love this city and know how precious our community is and who make a difference in its life every day of the year.